



CHAPTER SIX

STORIES OF NINE DECADES WHAT HAPPENED 40 YEARS AGO



Brave solo of a young Finn.

American Bill Rodgers ruled the world rankings 40 years ago, and the quality of the best performances dropped below the 2:10 mark. Košice's residents in 1979 could also take pride in their winner from 1976. This was Takeshi So, who had improved his personal best in Fukuoka to 2:10:40 and also cracked the world top ten for the first time.

The marathon in Košice thus had to genuinely be organized with the growing world competition in mind, and after an exceptionally successful period of brilliant performances from the likes of Popov, Bikila, Edelen, Wolde and Farrington, it tried also to attract young talented runners on the threshold of their careers to the start in the new situation.

*So it was for a 22-year-old Finn, **Jouni Kortelainen**. This was not his debut in Košice, however. The year before he'd earned the bronze here, and so his knowledge of the course seemed to give him the necessary courage. He was the first winner since the time of Bikila to lead from the Seňa turning point on, and all his rivals simply watched his back all the way to the finish*

line. At that time he certainly had no idea that this bold solo run would ultimately bring him the greatest triumph of his running career.

Thus, he added yet another Finnish name to the pylon below the marathon statue, from where four previous victors had previously come during the first decade of races in Košice after the Second World War. Kortelainen would improve to **2:12:09** the next year, but he failed at the Moscow Olympics in 1980, and in 1981 he finished in **12th place in Boston**.

Since the strict qualification limit still applied in 1979, the starting field was not broad four decades ago as it is today. The time of the last runner to the finish line, Václav Kameník, representing the club Sokol Dolní Zálezly, was 2:44:02, who finished 65th overall. Three homegrown runners finished in the top ten. In addition to the silver medal of Stanislav Tománek, these were Josef Jánský (6) and Košice native Pavol Madár (8), who, as a coach and physiotherapist, has remained true to this running event to this day.

Jouni Kortelainen did not return to the scene of his triumph until 2018, when he visited Kosice with his family to enjoy the famous places and memories of the marathon chroniclers.

RESULTS

Kosice Peace Marathon, October 7, 1979

Men

1.	Jouni Kortelainen	FIN	2:15:12,0
2.	Stanislav Tománek	TCH (CZE)	2:15:41,0
3.	Helfried Tannert	GDR (GER)	2:15:44,0